



UNIVERSITÀ DI PAVIA
DIPARTIMENTO DI GENETICA E MICROBIOLOGIA

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Dr. Joshua Lederberg
Rockefeller University
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Dear Josh,

I want to thank you very much for having my name put on the mailing list of the Research Profiles of the Rockefeller University, generally very interesting and particularly so in the Spring 1990 issue, featuring a fascinating piece of history of modern biology!

In these last few weeks I am trying to put in writing the perception I have kept in my mind of the events leading to genetic engineering, beginning with the isolation of the B. subtilis gene for rRNA, which we achieved in Pavia in 1968 non independently from suggestions of yours, channeled to us through Luca, to the synthesis of the first gene with Gobind at Wisconsin and then at MIT, the first attempts to produce recombinant DNA molecules with Ethan Signer at MIT, then the blunt end joining, the joinability of EcoRI ends, discovered in your lab at Stanford, then the Asilomar conference etc etc. In most if not all of these events, your presence is dominant or at least relevant. I am considering the possibility of taking off some time to write on all this and I wonder whether you could give^{me} some help in order to do a better job. The ways you could help are plentiful:

1. I need some of your time, to discuss with you a variety of points,
2. It would be very attractive for me to come to Rockefeller for say 2-3 month to do some work, to talk to you, and why not ? to try, possibly with you, some bench work aiming to the by now famous molecular version of Griffith "pabulum" experiment, of which we (Dusko and

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myself) have talked to you in the past; and also to speak to Rollin Hotchkiss (in my knowledge he coined the expression Genetic Engineering, but I cannot find any support for that: what is your idea?) and others on the origins and landmarks of genetic engineering. Could you give me your comments on this crazy idea and possibly some hints as to where some economical support could be applied for?

3. A couple of years ago, for a short meeting, I have experienced the splendid hospitality of Villa Serbelloni of the Rockefeller Foundation, located ^{in Bellagio,} on the Lake Como north of Milano: I have been told the facility is available and indeed I find it optimal for a few weeks undisturbed sejour, which I would treasure in order to finalize the job, sometime next year. Also on this I would appreciate very much your illuminating advice.

Hoping that everything is going on smoothly for you, I am most sincerely and friendly yours,

Vittorio Sgaramella

